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# Exit, Pursued By A Bear



## Synopsis

Veronica Mars meets William Shakespeare in a brave and unforgettable YA heroine whose story will inspire and provoke. Hermione Winters is captain of her cheerleading team, and in tiny Palermo Heights, this doesn't mean what you think it means. At PHHS, the cheerleaders don't cheer for the sports teams; they are the sports team—the pride and joy of a small town. The team's summer training camp is Hermione's last and marks the beginning of the end of her life. She's not sure what. She does know this season could make her a legend. But during a camp party, someone slips something in her drink. And it all goes black. In every class, there's a star cheerleader and a pariah pregnant girl. They're never supposed to be the same person. Hermione struggles to regain the control she's always had and faces a wrenching decision about how to move on. The rape wasn't the beginning of Hermione Winter's story and she's not going to let it be the end. She won't be anyone's cautionary tale. "E.K. Johnston has a seemingly limitless range.... This is realistic fiction at it's best." —The Globe & Mail "Johnston's clever—but never precious—update of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* is unflinching but not at all graphic in its treatment of sexual violence.... Middle and high school readers will pass this powerful, engaging story around and around." —Kirkus Reviews, 4-starred review "Fierce and gorgeously drawn, this is a rape story that doesn't focus on victimhood." —Booklist, 4-starred review "A beautifully written portrait of a young woman facing the unthinkable, this is a must-buy for high school collections." —SLJ, 4-starred review "Exit, Pursued by a Bear" is an important new novel comparable with *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson. —VOYA.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

E.K. Johnston's *EXIT, PURSUED BY A BEAR* is a powerful, emotional, tough yet positive story that is exceptionally well-written. It's not easy reading a story about rape. It's challenging, difficult, angry-making, heartbreaking. But the author presents it in a way that lets you see beyond that violent act and get to know her character, connect with her, see her for who she is and was and not just as a victim. It is a moving and engaging story that, while it puts you through the ringer, allows you to feel hope. Hermione is strong, but not unrealistically so. She has a great support structure in her parents, her friends, her coach, the police officer assigned to her case, her therapist, yet not one that feels as if she's too fortunate to have it. She refuses to be labeled as a victim, act like one, or be treated like one. But she's not afraid to rely on her supports to help her through the day-to-day. *EXIT, PURSUED BY A BEAR* lets you get to know Hermione both before her attack and after "flaws and all. It lets you share in her recovery process. It focuses on the positive "healing, strength, resilience, goals, choices, power" but keeps things believable. It tells Hermione's story in a way that is as helpful and informative as it is compelling. And while it doesn't shy away from the subject matter, it doesn't feel exploitative. While the topic may be one that is too mature, too personal, or too sensitive for some readers, it is not one that should dissuade other readers from picking up this incredibly amazing book. *EXIT, PURSUED BY A BEAR* is not too dark, too depressing, too weighty. The author struck just the right balance between seriousness and entertainment. It is uplifting. It is heart-rending. It is hopeful. It is beautifully written. Hermione Winters is inspiring. And it is one of those extraordinary stories that might just help one reader find a way through the darkness or find a way to help someone they know through it. I cannot recommend this enough.

Grade: A  
One Word: Strong  
After Hermoine is drugged and raped at cheer camp, her friends, family and community rally around to support her. Although there is some gossip, her boyfriend seems to blame her for the attack. She can't remember who attacked her, but hopes with the help of her therapist, she can bring her rapist to justice. I love so much about *EXIT, PURSUED BY A BEAR*, an important addition to YA literature and I wish this special novel was on every parent and teen reading list. First, Hermoine is a great heroine and narrator. She is the epitome of a survivor. Yes, she was brutally victimized, but she doesn't run from the trauma. She feels her emotions, leans on

her family, friends and professionals. She has the type of support system I only wish rape victims had. While perhaps not the norm, there are survivors who have strong support from the beginning. People sometimes don't know how to act around victims of trauma. Look no further than best friend Polly as a role model. She allows Hermoine to have her feelings, yet bolsters her friend's strength and courage. Hermoine's parents provide wonderful support. In the beginning, her father is somewhat afraid of her, fearful touching her will invoke a PTSD reaction, but he comes around. Though her parents are devastated, she never has to take care of their feelings or responses. They act like grownups with appropriate boundaries. All of the characters have strengths and weaknesses, but they are defined by their positive attributes. They stretch and grow, even when that growth is painful. I also love how Hermoine's decision to have an abortion is instinctual, that everyone including her pastor supports her decision, and that abortion doesn't have to be a sad, traumatic procedure. It can be as inconsequential as having a tooth pulled. The trauma was the rape, the abortion was a positive part of moving forward. I hope those who disagree with a woman's choice don't let this deter them from the over all message of the book. My only criticism is the therapist is a bit too unconventional and he seems to either convince or reinforce that Hermoine's experience is so special and unique professionals make their careers on her rape. She is special and unique, not because of what happened to her, but because of who she is and how she responds after the worst trauma of her life. Therapists, cops, nurses and doctors see too many sexual assaults to count, and each is unique and special and memorable and horrific. EK Johnson is pitch perfect in the voice and writing. I hope she writes more realistic YA fiction. THEMES: rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, cheerleading, friendship, family, community, recovery, abortion EXIT, PURSUED BY A BEAR is an important read for teens and everyone who cares about them.

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